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Volunteers in the Courts News Winter 2002

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Milwaukee CASA Gears up for First Volunteer Training

Milwaukee County is implementing a new CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) program with funds given by the Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation specifically for this purpose. Organizers are now recruiting and screening volunteers. By mid February, they had a group of 20 ready to participate in training.

"They are moving forward very well," said Marsha Varvil-Weld, executive director of the Wisconsin CASA Association. As soon as enough volunteers are trained, Varvil-Weld said, the program will begin to assign CASAs to cases.

Start-up has gone smoothly in part because of the assistance provided by the Wisconsin CASA Association, a statewide organization that provides assistance and technical support to new and existing CASAs in the state. The association was recently formed with a \$50,000 grant from the National CASA Association.

Headquartered in Portage, the organization offers assistance and technical support to counties interested in starting a new CASA program or fine-tuning a current program.

Wisconsin's Eight CASAs

Taken from the National CASA Association VolunteerMatch Database:

Columbia-Sauk CASA Program

Location: Portage

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community, Crisis Support

Conflict Resolution Center, Inc. (CASA)

Location: Fond du Lac

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community

CASA of Brown County

Location: Green Bay

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community

Dane County CASA Program

Location: Madison

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community

Milwaukee CASA

Location: Milwaukee

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community

Red Cliff Tribal CASA Project

Location: Bayfield

Categories: Children & Youth

Voices For Children (CASA)

Location: Kenosha

Categories: Advocacy & Human Rights, Children & Youth, Community, Education & Literacy, Politics

Wisconsin CASA will also advise programs on policies and procedures and provide education about relevant legislation.

YWCA CASA for Kids
Location: La Crosse

If you know of a program that exists in Wisconsin and it is not listed, please go to <http://casa.volunteermatch.org> to post the organization.

Varvil-Weld visits programs all over the state to answer questions, discuss concerns, and share information. Common concerns are budget, volunteer recruiting and policymaking. Varvil-Weld plans on regular site visits to each program in the near future to help ensure their questions and concerns are addressed.

One of the association's goals is to create new programs in the state. Varvil-Weld said the first step is to make the people in the system aware of CASA and to educate them about the benefits of participating in the program. Even some rural counties that have relatively few CHIPS (child in need of protection and/or services) cases and even less funding can offer the services of CASAs with a little creativity. Varvil-Weld said Columbia and Sauk counties created a dual program that has been very successful. She believes more counties could do this.

The Wisconsin CASA Association will host its first conference September 21 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells. A representative from the National CASA Association will speak at the event.

History of CASA

Concerned over making decisions about abused and neglected children's lives without sufficient information, a Seattle judge conceived the idea of using trained community volunteers to speak for the best interests of these children in court. This program's success led judges across the country to begin using citizen advocates. In 1990, Congress encouraged the expansion of CASA with passage of the Victims of Child Abuse Act. Today more than 900 CASA programs are in operation, with 58,000 women and men serving as CASA volunteers.

A survey taken by the National CASA Association using 2000 data indicates that there was a 10.7 percent increase in children served from 1999 to 2000, resulting in an estimated 229,090 children served by local CASA programs. The survey also shows that the number of CASA volunteers increased by 11.1 percent, resulting in 58,620 estimated volunteers in all programs. Volunteer hours increased by 16.2 percent, resulting in an estimated 8,354,610 hours contributed in 2000. To view the full survey results, go to www.casanet.org.

Those interested in learning more about CASA programs, starting a new program, or arranging for a speaker for a group may contact Varvil-Weld at (608) 742-5344, fax (608) 742-4087, or e-mail wicasa@wisconsincasa.org.

Outagamie County's VIOS Program Publishes New Handbook

Volunteers in Offender Services (VIOS), which figuratively wrote the book on mentoring, tutoring, and providing other services to juvenile and adult offenders, has now literally written a book – a handbook for volunteers. The book will be provided to all VIOS volunteers and will be available for purchase by other court-connected volunteer programs on a first-come, first-served basis. It includes job descriptions for all volunteer positions; updated information on insurance coverage; profiles of common personality characteristics among probationers and inmates; and detailed guidelines for volunteering in the jail.

VIOS began its program 30 years ago, and continues to add components to the services provided through its team of 125 volunteers. One of the more recent additions is the Dads Program, a parenting class for fathers incarcerated at the Huber Center. VIOS, in cooperation with the county's Human Services Department and Sheriff's Department, developed a 10-week program that teaches a wide range of parenting skills in two-hour classes held one night per week. Last year, 22 dads completed the program.

VIOS will celebrate its 30-year anniversary with a banquet on April 8. Chief Justice Shirley S. Abrahamson will be the keynote speaker.

Contact VIOS at (920) 832-5248 for more information or to order a handbook.

Youth Courts Begin Year-Long Public Awareness Campaign

A one-year Public Awareness and Service Campaign has officially begun for 2002. The National Youth Court Center (NYCC) has invited all youth courts to participate in this first-time program to increase public awareness on various topical issues.

There are at least 17 youth courts in Wisconsin, operating in rural and urban counties around the state. Youth courts, also called peer courts and teen courts, take many forms but generally they permit teenagers to hear cases against their peers and decide appropriate punishment. The typical participant is between the ages of 12 and 17 and is a

Campaign Themes

January

Martin Luther King Jr.

February

National Child Passenger
Safety Awareness

March

National Inhalants and Poisons
Awareness

April

National Crime Victims' Rights

non-violent first offender. In most youth courts, the offender must admit the offense and agree to abide by the court's decision before being accepted into the program. Completion of the sentence removes the offense from the youths record.

The NYCC is encouraging staff, youth, and adult volunteers currently involved in the more than 850 youth courts nationwide to support the campaign through service to their individual communities. Through this campaign, the NYCC hopes to connect youth and adults by encouraging them to volunteer together in their communities.

The goals are to:

- ☐ Educate youth involved in the program on important social/societal issues.
- ☐ Facilitate more meaningful and educational community service options for youth.
- ☐ Share a common experience with other youth courts from across the country.
- ☐ Increase the youth court programs recognition among other local community agencies and groups.

To prepare for the campaign, themes were selected for each month. To generate broad interest and to make it a fair process, all active and developing youth courts were mailed a ballot and asked to vote for one campaign per month. The featured campaigns that won are listed in the sidebar.

Once the campaigns were selected, each program received a Public Awareness and Service Campaign package that included background information for each monthly campaign and ideas for projects or activities. The package also included materials and forms for evaluating the activities and reporting to the NYCC.

For more information about the campaign contact the National Youth Court Center at (859) 244-8211, fax (859) 244-8001, or e-mail hycc@csg.org. The campaign package is available at www.youthcourt.net.

May
Law Day

June
National Safety Day

July
National Parents Day

August
National Kids Day

September
National Youth Court Month

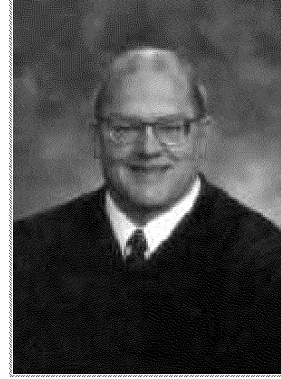
October
Make a Difference

November
Family Volunteerism

December
Tie one on for Safety

Marinette County to use Victim Impact Panels

Marinette County Circuit Court Judge Tim A. Duket is leading an effort to organize drunk driving victim impact panels for Marinette County. The first panel discussion will take place on the evening of April 16 at the courthouse.



Judge Tim A. Duket

As of early February, Duket and Judge David G. Miron had ordered about 25 second-offense drunk drivers to attend. They were also exploring the possibility of inviting judges in nearby counties to send drunk drivers through the Marinette program. The judges in Door and Kewaunee counties have embraced this approach to victim impact panels, joining forces because of the relatively small number of convicted drunk drivers in the two counties.

Victim impact panels are designed to give offenders an up-close look at the devastation that can result from drunk driving. Victims spend about an hour relating their stories as offenders listen. According to an Outagamie County study, 14.7 percent of offenders who attended a victim impact panel committed another drunk driving offense; the recidivism rate among those who did not attend was 36.4 percent.

After hearing about the program, Duket sat through a victim impact panel in Appleton with Outagamie County Circuit Court Judge John Des Jardins, who helped to organize that county's program. "I thought it was an excellent program," Duket said, "and I wondered if we could imitate it here in Marinette."

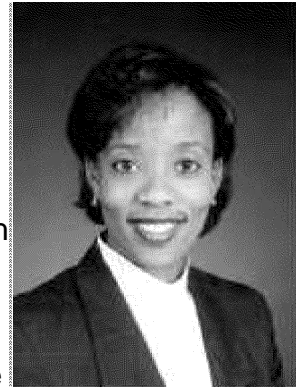
One challenge Duket has found is bringing the victims to Marinette. Some have to travel a fair distance, and he is looking into whether they might be reimbursed for their mileage.

To organize the Marinette program, Duket brought together representatives of a local alcohol counseling program, officers from the Marinette Police Department and Wisconsin State Patrol, the victim-witness coordinator, the clerk of circuit court, a probation and parole officer, a court reporter, an assistant district attorney and several private attorneys. The state chair for Mothers Against Drunk Driving is also involved.

The University of Wisconsin Law School's Resource Center on Impaired Driving has published a reference manual on victim impact panels. To order a copy, call (800) 862-1048 or (608) 265-3411.

Appointment Committee Changes the Face of Court-Related Boards

Interested in serving on a court-related board or committee? If so, you will get to know the Appointment Selection Committee, a group of 12 people of diverse interests and backgrounds who are in charge of reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Supreme Court. The Court created the committee in March 2000 to help promote quality and diversity in candidates for service on court boards and committees.



Atty. Michelle A. Behnke

The Court designed the Appointment Selection Committee as an independent body to avoid the appearance of favoritism or patronage in the appointment process.

Members of the selection committee are designated by the deans of Wisconsin's two law schools, the heads of the State Bars Family Law Section, General Practice Section and Government Lawyers Division, and by two county bar association presidents that are chosen at random from the Eastern District and Western District of Wisconsin. Lawyers who served in the Lawyer Regulation System are also tapped. To be eligible to serve on the selection committee, a lawyer must have practiced law for at least five years.

The Senate and Assembly co-chairs of the Legislative Council and the state Ethics Board chair select the three public members of the Appointment Selection Committee.

"This group comes together in the most objective way," said Madison Atty. Michelle A. Behnke, the committee's co-chair (the other co-chair is Mona Steele of the League of Women Voters). "Members are not hand-picked because of how we're likely to vote. There's no way to rig who is on the selection committee." Behnke said the committee benefits the court system in a number of ways, particularly in that it brings legitimacy to the appointment process. "Perception is really important," she said. "The public doesn't always perceive that lawyers are adequately governing themselves and that doesn't serve anyone well."

The committee meets as often as necessary, collecting names of lawyers and non-lawyers interested in serving on bodies such as the Board of Bar Examiners and the boards and

Members of the Appointment Selection Committee

Atty. Michelle A. Behnke, Madison

Arnold L. Brown, M.D., Madison

Atty. Elizabeth Estes, Milwaukee

Atty. Thomas R. Marlier, Shawano

William J. Hotaling, retired PepsiCo executive, DePere

Atty. Marjorie Schuett, Madison

Atty. Grant F. Langley, Milwaukee

Atty. Barbara A. Neider, Madison

Atty. Charles G. Norseng,
Chippewa Falls

Atty. C. Gordon Paulson,
Rhineland

Mona Steele, League of Women

committees associated with the Office of Lawyer Regulation. "We look and see if we can't get a good mix," Behnke said.

Voters, Madison

Jacqueline Turk, UW-Marathon Center

One of the committee's biggest challenges has been publicizing open seats, especially those designated for non-lawyers, to ensure a good pool of candidates. The committee seeks publicity around the state through press releases, letters to the editor, word of mouth, and public service organizations such as the League of Women Voters, Rotary, and Kiwanis. "Getting a sufficient number of names to serve on the committees can be difficult – particularly public names," Behnke said. The committee also strives to form geographically diverse committees.

Behnke said she enjoys the diversity of the Appointment Selection Committee, and the group's work ethic. "There is now an objective group of people to look for nominees, which increases public confidence," she said. "The public sees this work is done by hard-working people who care about public service."

How to Apply

Lawyers and non-lawyers interested in serving on a court-related board or committee should send a letter and resume to: Cornelia Clark, Clerk of the Supreme Court, P.O. Box 1688, Madison, WI 53701-1688, or fax to Clark's attention at: (608) 267-0640 or e-mail cornelia.clark@courts.state.wi.us. Positions are filled on a continual basis and resumes will be kept on file for consideration for future opportunities.